



## **Mental Health Update March 16, 2007**

### **Designated Agency Sustainability Study Underway**

The study of the Vermont DA system's sustainability has begun with a plan for convening numerous group meetings to solicit input from provider and consumer groups. The Pacific Health Policy Group (PHPG), the consulting group hired to conduct the study, met Thursday with the DA Sustainability Study Advisory Board and many members of the Developmental Services Statewide Standing Committee who were available by virtue of having just held their monthly meeting in the same location. The group heard a presentation by the PHPG consultants about the methodology for collecting information from consumers and providers, and welcomed feedback from the group about their information gathering strategy.

In 2007, the Vermont Legislature called for a study of the DA system's sustainability and a five-year plan that would result from that study. The Advisory Board will continue to follow the study's progress until the final report is presented in August, 2007.

### **Vermont State Hospital Inspection Report**

The annual safety inspection of the Vermont State Hospital, initiated by the state and conducted by an independent Boston architectural firm, concluded that the hospital has made significant improvements to the facility that enhance safety and security for patients and staff.

An original inspection was performed on February 21, 2006 by Graham/Meus Architects, Inc., with the second annual inspection conducted on February 5, 2007.

"Vermont State Hospital earned an A-plus for the work that was completed to address numerous safety, security and environmental conditions that were cited in a report we prepared last year," said Gary L. Graham, a principal with Graham/Meus Architects. "They took the report seriously, and were diligent in the work that was completed to improve the cited conditions at the Vermont State Hospital."

The Douglas administration has invested substantial resources to improve the current facility, including more than \$1 million in renovations and an additional 52 staff positions added to the facility during the past three years.

Governor Douglas is proposing an additional \$2.1 million in FY 2008 for staffing improvements and facility renovations.

“The report clearly shows how comprehensively the State of Vermont is addressing issues that could affect the health and welfare of our patients and staff,” said Michael Hartman, deputy commissioner for Mental Health at the Vermont Department of Health. “The report cites ‘extraordinary improvements’ and notes the care and commitment demonstrated to improve patient safety. We know progress still needs to be made to address concerns cited by the Department of Justice, but this particular report is good news for Vermont.”

The report addresses other building issues, but these are related to structural issues of the aged building, and the ongoing need to have a new hospital facility.

To view the complete report log onto:

<http://healthvermont.gov/news/2007/2007news.aspx>

## **VERMONT INTEGRATED SERVICES INITIATIVE (VISI)**

### **HCRS Partners to Provide Integrated Services**

The Vermont Integrated Services Initiative is happy to announce that it will be partnering with the Health Care and Rehabilitation Services (HCRS) in Southern Vermont in its efforts to increase capacity to provide integrated, comprehensive care to people with co-occurring mental health and substance use conditions. VISI is inviting over 20 agencies in the mental health, substance use, primary care and criminal justice fields as well as peer support groups to participate in this innovative capacity building process. HCRS will be the first agency to work with the VISI team.

### **VISI Committee Updates**

**The Information Technology Committee** is continuing with its Managed Care Information System Review Project which, in its conclusion, will create better report writing capability and decrease the amount of errors that are sent back to providers who submit data through the Monthly Service Report. Eventually, the hope is that this project be a foundation on which to better integrate the mental health and substance use information systems.

**The Financial Planning Committee**, a sub committee of the VISI Statewide Steering Committee, will meet on the fourth Friday of every month from 2 pm to 3 pm. This committee will look at the current issues related to mental health and substance use funding and look for innovative ways to fund co-occurring activities. The committee is composed of state employees, providers and consumers.

**The Executive Committee and Clinical Practices Committees** have not set dates for their first meetings.

### **National Co-Occurring State Initiative Grant (COSIG) News**

The VISI team attended the COSIG annual meeting of grantees in Baltimore in early March. There are now 17 COSIG grantees around the country. Vermont is the only state

that is engaging in such a diverse array of entities across the system of care from peer support groups to primary care providers to mental health and substance abuse programs.

Preliminary evaluations have been collated from the national evaluation team. One finding suggests that the grant activities are much too short in duration to have an effect on integrating systems at the statewide level.

Vermont was chosen to present on its peer support initiative at the conference. Integrating peer supports and self-help groups into this process has been a challenge for many states and simply overlooked by others.

## **FUTURES PROJECT**

### **BISHCA Extends Time Line for Conceptual Certificate of Need Decision**

On March 13, Herbert Olson, commissioner designee to render the decision on the VDH Conceptual Certificate of Need application, issued an order extending the deadline for the decision by 30 days. Reasons cited for the delay included: the importance of the public policy issues at stake, the length and complexity of the application, the obligation to consider the Public Oversight Commission's recommendations, and the need for more time "to properly and completely review the record."

### **Proposals to Develop Four Crisis Beds Approved**

Proposals by two Designated Agencies to develop four crisis beds have been approved as part of the recent solicitation of plans to create additional crisis beds this fiscal year. Acting Commissioner Sharon Moffatt has approved the following crisis bed proposals:

- Northwestern Counseling and Support Services: 2 Crisis Beds as well as a CRT Outreach program and a crisis observation bed at Northwest Medical Center
- Northeast Kingdom Human Services: Two crisis beds

These proposals were viewed favorably not only because they are located in areas of great need for this service, but also because both can be implemented within two months.

Acting Commissioner Moffatt applauded the effort of all the agencies that submitted thoughtful proposals and expressed hope that additional crisis beds would be approved in the upcoming year. The Governor's proposed budget calls for additional funds to add crisis bed capacity to Vermont's mental health system as an important component of the community system called for in the VSH Futures Plan.

## **VERMONT STATE HOSPITAL CENSUS**

The Vermont State Hospital Census was 41 as of midnight Wednesday night. The average census for the past 45 days was 49.